



If you are involved in an exciting new initiative, program, or research project, you may want to share your results with others. Presenting at a conference is a great way to do that. The first step in being accepted as a conference presenter or for providing a conference poster is to prepare an abstract.

Writing a conference abstract can seem like a daunting task. We've assembled some tips and resources we hope you will find helpful.

## What is an abstract?

An abstract is a brief summary of a presentation or research paper. It is intended to capture the reader's attention by providing a high level overview of the purpose of the project, the methodologies employed and key results or findings. In the case of a conference abstract, the audience is the conference committee and attendees. It may be helpful to think of an abstract as marketing or selling your program or research project.

## How do I know if the conference is a good choice?

The call for proposals prepared by the conference planning committee will identify the **conference audience**. The conference may be targeted to health care practitioners, administrators, government decision-makers, researchers etc.

The call for proposals will also identify the **conference themes**. Some examples are primary care reform, interprofessional education and care, and partnerships between public health and primary care. The focus of your presentation or poster should align very closely with one or more of the conference themes to improve your chances of being accepted.

In addition to the themes, the call for proposals will also describe the **type of conference**. Some examples are a research, innovation, or program evaluation conference.

All this information can help you decide if the conference is a good fit with the information you want to share. There are many conferences to choose from so if your idea for a presentation doesn't align with one conference, don't be discouraged. There may be other conferences that are a better fit.

## What should I keep in mind in writing an abstract?

If you can, **start drafting the abstract early** so you can leave the draft for a few days and return to it later with a fresh perspective to edit and refine the draft abstract.

Find out if you need to **register for a password** in advance to upload your abstract. If registration is required, do this in advance – don't wait until the deadline, especially if the deadline is in the evening or on the weekend when it is less likely that an administrator will be available to help you with any technical difficulties you encounter.

A **short, unique title** will help grab the audience's attention.

Include in the abstract a **clear statement** of the topic, **how** the research or program was undertaken, and **who** will find the results interesting. Will the results be of value to researchers, other health care providers, administrators, government, etc.?

Consider the **amount of time** allotted for the presentation. The amount of content you can cover in 15 minutes is quite different than that in a one hour presentation.



Use **precise, clear language** and an active voice throughout your abstract. Avoid using personal pronouns. Steer away from abbreviations and acronyms since the audience may not know what they represent. Submission guidelines provide key information.

Since there is generally a limit on word count, every sentence needs to add value. Keep this in mind when editing the abstract.

## Should I have a peer or colleague review the draft abstract?

Asking a peer or colleague for feedback is a great idea. Ideally this would be someone who is familiar with writing abstracts. Ask the person to read the draft critically and provide suggestions on areas of improvement. Share the Call for Proposals with them so they can look at whether the abstract meets the rules established by the conference planning committee.

## What if my abstract isn't accepted?

Stay positive! Conferences generally receive a lot of high quality abstracts and there are a limited number of abstracts that can be accepted. Even a really good abstract may not be accepted due to the number of high quality submissions.

## More information

There are a number of websites that can provide helpful tips on preparing an abstract. A few of them are:

- <http://hswriting.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/hswriting/article/view/3322/1447>
- <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/writing/abstract.html>
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3114208/>

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